

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 7, 2009

The Honorable Barack H. Obama
President of the United States
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Obama:

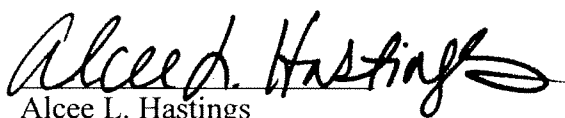
The Florida panther is one of the most endangered species in the world as only 80-100 of them survive today. As you know, the two greatest threats to the Florida panther are the loss of habitat and automobile-related deaths, both of which are caused by increased development in environmentally sensitive areas. The best available science suggests that current lands in conservation do not provide enough suitable habitat area to support even the limited number of existing panthers. Further, in just the first month of 2009, three panthers were killed by cars.

As members of the Florida delegation, we are writing to request your support in establishing a critical habitat designation for the endangered Florida panther. The Florida panther was listed as an endangered species 42 years ago, but critical habitat has never been established, even though the *Endangered Species Act* includes a requirement for the designation of critical habitat for endangered species. In other words, the Florida panther is protected by the federal *Endangered Species Act*, unfortunately its home is not.

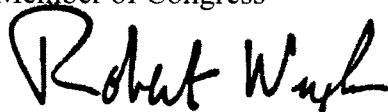
It is of great importance to designate a critical habitat not only because it would preserve and encourage the growth of the current population of Florida panthers, but also because it would help to protect other valuable environmental resources, such as wetlands, aquifer-recharge areas, drinking water supplies and the habitat of other endangered species. Moreover, a designation of critical habitat does not mean that no further development is allowed in an area, it simply requires additional review when projects requiring federal permits would impact habitats considered essential to preventing the Florida panther from going extinct.

We urge you to ensure the continued existence of the Florida panther and the preservation of Southwest Florida's natural resources and unique character by supporting the designation of critical habitat for the endangered Florida panther. Thank you for your time and consideration. The decision to take action now will provide a historic opportunity for protecting the Earth's most endangered "umbrella species" – the Florida panther.

Sincerely,



Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress



Robert Wexler
Member of Congress



Ron Klein
Member of Congress



Corrine Brown
Member of Congress



Alan Grayson
Member of Congress

Cc:
The Honorable Ken Salazar, Secretary of Interior